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BABYLONIAN LETTER.—THE JOSEPH SHEMTOB COLLECTION OF BABYLONIAN ANTIQUITIES RECENTLY PURCHASED FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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Now at Baghdad, Turkey.

The above, so-called, *Joseph Shemtob* collection of antiquities was purchased on July 21, 1888, for the University of Pennsylvania. The most important tablets—about 175 in number—have been numbered, catalogued and packed in glass-top cases. The whole collection has been shipped direct to Philadelphia, and it is hoped that it will arrive on or before October 15th.

Speaking generally, this lot of tablets is a most valuable one. It contains pieces of almost every description, e. g. cylinders, cone, mortar, bricks, land-grant, contracts, case-tablet, astronomical, astrological, omen, liturgical, letter, practice tablets, etc., etc. Again, while almost all of the tablets are of an exceedingly early date, there are several of a correspondingly late date.

These tablets have been numbered after the method used by the British Museum, viz., J. S. 7-21-88-1 = Joseph Shemtob, July 21, 1888, No. 1, etc. A short description of a few of the most important may be of interest.

J. S. 7-21-88-1. A large barrel cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar. This cylinder is the largest and most perfect one in existence and contains some additional facts not to be found on any published, or unpublished, cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar. It is in a perfect state of preservation. Length, 26 cms.; circumference at top, 45 cms.; at base, 47 cms., and in middle, 55 cms. Compare photograph.

J. S. 7-21-88-2. A large alabaster vase, cracked lengthwise through the middle. It is the largest and finest specimen yet found. It is inscribed with a quadrilingual inscription, containing the words, "Xerxes, the great king." Height, 25 cms.; circumference at top, 40 cms., and at base, 73 cms. This vase has been examined by Sayce, Pinches, Strassmaier, Brünnow, and others, and there is no doubt that it is genuine. It has been mended, in a most satisfactory way, by Mr. Ready, Jr., of the British Museum. Compare photograph.

J. S. 7-21-88-3. A Hammurabi cone, containing two columns of 44 and 36 lines respectively. The cone proper is 12 cms. high and 28.7 cms. in circumference. Col. I. is almost perfectly preserved. Col. II. is badly broken, some parts

being entirely lost. For a fuller account of this most interesting cone, see a future number of *HEBRAICA*. Compare also photograph.

J. S. 7-21-88-4. A mortar of Burnaburiaš, 13-14 cms. high and 40.5 cms. in circumference. This mortar contains a non-Semitic inscription, in archaic characters, of 27 lines—one of which is double—with rather a deep groove between each line. The inscription is very well preserved, only one or two places being illegible. The whole space, however, not occupied by the inscription is broken out to a depth of 6-7 cms. Inside depth of mortar is 9.5 cms. It is of solid stone. Some are inclined to regard this mortar as a gate socket. Cf. photograph.

J. S. 7-21-88-6. An Esarhaddon brick, containing an inscription of 11 lines, four of which are double. This brick is perfectly preserved, 17 cms. long; 7.5 cms. wide, and 6.5 thick.

J. S. 7-21-88-7. A large, broken brick of Nebuchadnezzar, containing 15-16 lines of inscription. The upper corner of the right side is broken off. Inscription, so far as it is preserved, is quite legible. 22 cms. long; 19.3 wide, and 8.5 thick.

J. S. 7-21-88-8. Large astrological tablet of yellowish clay, dated in the month Šebatu of the seventh year of Nabopolassar. Extreme length, 15.5 cms.; width, 12.5 cms., and extreme thickness, 3 cms. The lower end of the obverse and upper end of the reverse are broken away. The characters are extremely small, but very legible. With the exception of one paragraph, deep grooves separate the lines. The tablet was originally much longer, as can be seen from the graduated thickness. It has been cleaned and repaired by Mr. Ready.

J. S. 7-21-88-9. Astronomical tablet of black, reddish, burnt clay. Obverse in paragraphs and reverse in four columns. Characters on obverse rather difficult and illegible. On reverse much clearer and plainer. Original size of tablet was, perhaps, 2 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ times its present size. Length, 9.5 cms.; width, 12.6 cms., and extreme thickness, 2 cms. This tablet is very important. It contains astronomical and mathematical calculations of the rising and setting of the planets, mathematical calculations of the new and full moon for the years 154, 142, 155 and 115 of the Arsacide era. Dated in the year 161 of the same era. Father Strassmaier has copied this tablet and he will give his copy with notes in a future number of *HEBRAICA*.

J. S. 7-21-88-10. A reddish-gray contract tablet dated on the 14th of Ululu II., in the fifth year of Kandalanu. This tablet is perfectly preserved and it is written in very legible characters.

J. S. 7-21-88-11. Fine contract, with perfect seals on all sides—seven in number—almost perfectly preserved. It is dated on the 18th of Šebatu, in the sixth year of Darius (Da-ri-ia-uš), “king of Babylon, king of countries.” Length, 6.3 cms.; width, 8.2 cms.; thickness, 2 cms. The characters are exceedingly clear and the seals very valuable.

J. S. 7-21-88-12. Contract tablet, perfectly preserved, dated on the fifth of Tašritu, in the first year of Artaxerxes (Ar-tak-šad-su).

J. S. 7-21-88-13. Contract tablet, in good state of preservation, dated on the twenty-third of Nisanu, in the first year of Xerxes (Aḫ-ši-ka-ar-ši).

Nos. 19 and 20 are Hammurabi tablets; Nos. 22-25 are fragments of barrel cylinders; Nos. 41, 42 and 43 are Abêšû' tablets—a new king, tablets of whose reign have not been found as yet in any of the collections belonging to the British Museum; No. 63, contract of Neriglassar; No. 95 is an architectural tablet in non-Semitic; 142 is archaic fragment of Abêšû'.

Almost all of the remaining contract, case, tithe, memorandum, etc., tablets belong to Ammi-satana, Ammi-zaduga, Samsu-satana, Samsu-iluna, etc.

In the next number of HEBRAICA, I hope to give a short account of the so-called *Khabaza* collection, purchased from Mr. Joseph Shemtob, for the University of Pennsylvania, on August 15, 1888.

London, Sept. 10, 1888.